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PAUL THÉVENAZ
1891-1921

French art
$30

Art 45 105

PEACE

"When I am crucified upon his brow,
Will the strange god be at peace?"

—From "The Beloved Stranger."

PAUL THÉVENAZ

A RECORD OF HIS LIFE AND ART TOGETHER WITH AN ESSAY ON STYLE BY THE ARTIST

AND INCLUDING 107 REPRODUCTIONS OF HIS DRAWINGS, PAINTINGS & DECORATIVE WORK

PRIVATELY PRINTED
1922

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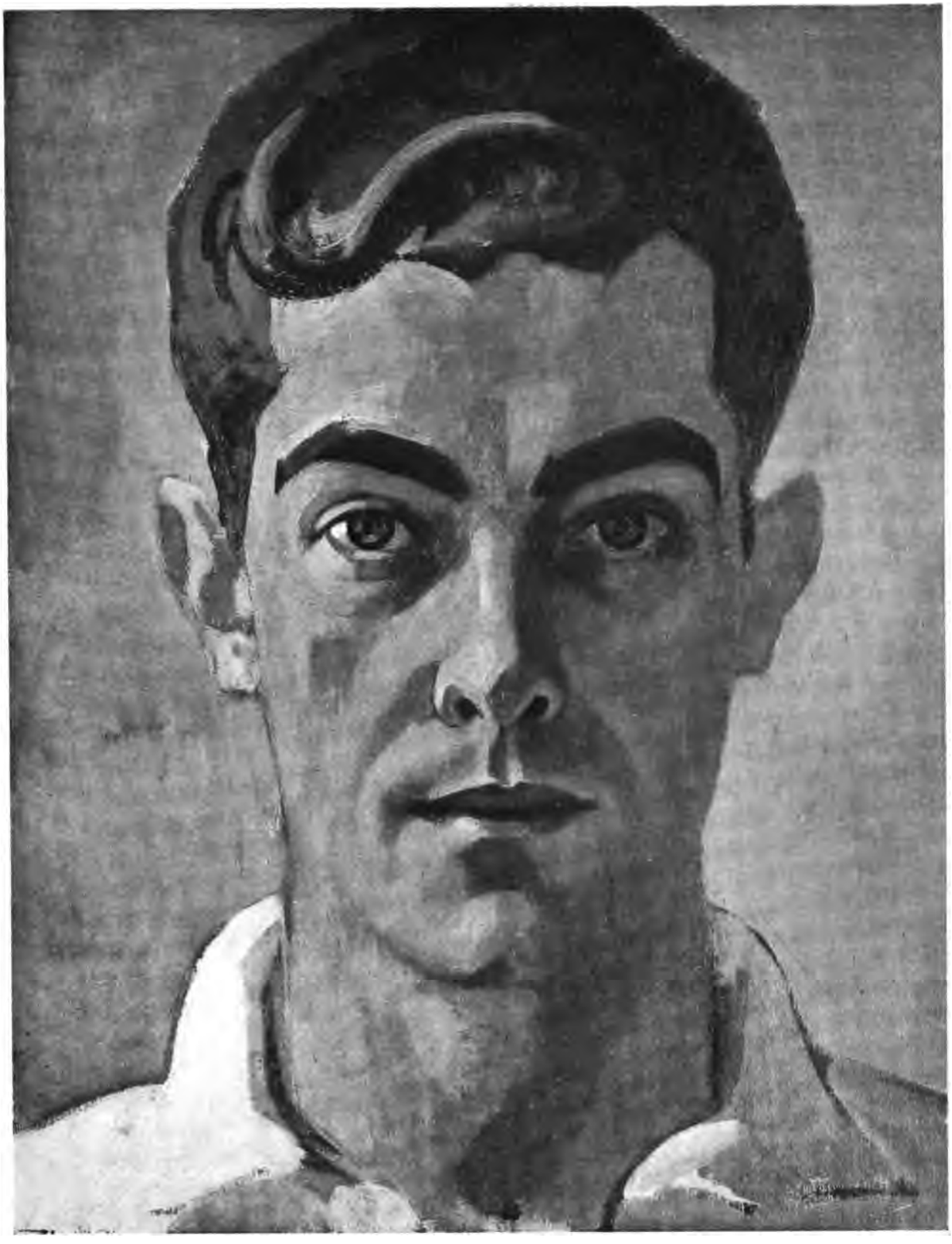


SELF PORTRAIT, 1920

AT WORK

PHOTOGRAPH BY ALICE BOUGHTON

AT PLAY

AT WORK

PHOTOGRAPH BY ALICE BOUGHTON

AT PLAY

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARCIA STEIN

PAUL THÉVENAZ

THE ARTIST *and* HIS WORK

PAUL THÉVENAZ

THE ARTIST AND HIS WORK

TO the inherently artistic, the decoration of one's home is perhaps the most absorbing of all thoughts. To make beautiful these homes was the work of Paul Thévenaz, mural decorator. Thévenaz was born at Geneva, Switzerland, on February 22, 1891. His childhood, spent in the clear heights of the Swiss mountains, his very soul was immersed in nature's beauty. The crystal lakes of Switzerland, the flaming sunrise, behind glistening, towering peaks, white rushing torrents, emerald fields, carpets of vivid flowers—all of these indescribable influences were burning into his sensitive appreciation. He no doubt

inherited diverse artistic tendencies. These he sought to gratify by travel and arduous work.

First he visited Italy and then proceeded to Paris to study and earn his living. The struggle there was a difficult one, a hand to mouth existence, but he said, "It did me good."

It was there Thévenaz gained recognition as a portrait painter. His work was distinctive in two ways, there was much elimination of background, and more pure likeness put into the portrait.

During these six years in Paris, the pre-war cubistic movement was strong enough to claim him, in so far that he became known as a Crystalist, a Prismatist and so on. He met Igor Stravinsky and Jean Cocteau, both of whom became strong influences in his artistic development. They endeavored to teach him that art is not a dramatic, hair-raising performance, but full of subtle humor, and very dependent upon hard work.

In his long talks with Stravinsky, he became convinced of the necessity for the knowledge of Geometry, mathematics, and the absolute mastery of technique.

A thorough grounding in Dalcroze's Rhythmics, at

his school of Music in Switzerland had laid the foundation of a clear musico-rhythmical knowledge, which he carried through all his work. In collaboration with Stravinsky and Cocteau, Thévenaz was devoting his energies to the production of the ballet, which was destined never to be given, on account of the breaking out of the great war.

During his training in the American Army his work of necessity stood still. Since the ending of the war, Thévenaz devoted himself entirely to his decorative work, and labored rapidly and untiringly. It became his creed! One finds in it all the glory of his early youthful surroundings, all the rhythm of his musical education, all the art of his creative genius.

Thévenaz said: "No matter what the subject is, decoration is related to music and the higher mathematics, it is a part of a highly educated life, an education for the 'non-educated.' It is the only honest and satisfactory form of art because it answers to a need and tries to fulfill someone's wishes. A painter of the Renaissance would not have painted a Madonna unless the Church had expressed a desire to worship it."

This desire to please—this willingness to adapt his work—did not frighten Thévenaz, a characteristic rare in the successful modern painter. Thévenaz felt that rather than lose by this, he gained. "The educated artist of today knows too much" he said, "and in too subjective a way."

"By doing decorative work the artist is given limitations by his customer's tastes or wishes; he has to fit his personality into the new shape every time, thus enlarging his means of expression and discovering that variety is not the enemy of style, but quite the contrary, its friend. If one has personality it will come out, no matter what one does."

The things that we live with are the things that we should grow to love, and so in these creations Paul Thévenaz found his work a serious attempt to please the one who is to dwell with them. To him it was more than just "painting a picture." He felt the desire of the home lover to fill his dwelling with beauty—an untiring, unfading beauty. He tried to meet that aspiration in whatsoever phase it might be expressed. He realized that he was not painting a canvas to be hung, first in

one room, then in another; but, with the architect, making his wall a veritable part of the house itself. There must be no monotony, no false note of color, no undue proportions—all must be harmonious.

"I believe," said Mr. Thévenaz, "that decoration is the most abstract form of art, the most musical, the most creative. That it requires more intelligence, more tact, more knowledge than any specialization in a particular form of landscape, or still life, or portrait."

In the exquisite harmony of colors, the use of brilliant tones, the laying on of pure paints, the vivid daring combinations, one feels the intense joy of the painter.

In the summer home of Mrs. Frederick Havemeyer on Long Island, in a spacious marble dining room, Mrs. Havemeyer requested Thévenaz to paint a nineteen-foot frieze on white oil-cloth.

"It was like ice-skating with red hot skates," said Mr. Thévenaz. In soft pastel tones, the tall buildings and broken skyline of Manhattan appear. If one has crossed the ferries at sunset, caught the red glow reflected upon gold towers and myriad window panes, he has also seen the ugly docks and piers transformed

into soft blending spots of color between the dark water and the jagged background of skyscrapers, and the liners and little craft sailing up and down.

With infinite patience Mr. Thévenaz persuaded his colors to remain fixed on the glazed white surface, and the result is unique and altogether stately and pleasing.

Another masterpiece is the private swimming pool in Mrs. George Blumenthal's New York home. The bare walls surrounding the pool have been transformed into a gorgeous, poetic sea garden.

Against an aqua-marine background of undersea tone, float myriad-colored sea anemones, glittering shoals of deep-sea fish, tall irridescent water flowers, great jewelled shells and dreaming mermaids with long tresses of seaweed texture. Corals, greens, pinks and blues, and rythm in every detail!

Here a phantom ship appears wrecked upon rocky depths, in a vivid mass of star fish. A great translucent octopus coils and uncoils below a little sea child clinging to an overhanging rock and gleefully deriding all danger.

In this swimming pool, as in much of his work, Mr. Thévenaz revelled in the exotic, the foreign, the imagin-

ative! As Chippendale, in his master conceptions, dared to use the best of all countries and periods, so this modern painter believed in a mixture of decoration, not as an aim, but as a means to achieve new effects. By employing so far as expedient, all experiences of the past, of the foreign, anachronisms, knowledge of whatsoever known of nature; he infused into one painting all that the varied musical instruments could bring into a symphony.

Thus he collaborated with the great Tiepolo of centuries ago, in painting a ceiling for the open Casino on Mr. James Deering's estate in Miami. The walls and gallery, original and restored, belong to the great master, and Thévenaz has completed the ceilings with the singing ladies and gay cavaliers of Eighteenth Century Italian charm.

Very modern, and thoroughly expressive of subtle humor is his decoration of a private moving picture ball-room on Long Island. About the oblong room, between delicate pink columns, appear decorated panels done alternately in charcoal and colors. Charlie Chaplin, characteristic and familiar, accompanied by the well

known Edna Purviance, Coney Island and the cop; Theda Bara reclines upon a couch surrounded by suicide lovers.

In the New York harbor, the most daring of aviators hangs by a rope ladder rescuing the lovely Pearl White, while William S. Hart, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks each appear with unmistakable personality. The alternate colored panels are fanciful and vivid in coloring. The everloved Punch and Judy—"The Final Kiss"—in charming Tyrolean costumes, and others of equal charm.

To children Paul Thévenaz is an unexpected delight. In a most original nursery, designed by Mrs. Ruby Ross Goodnow, Thévenaz has enchantingly covered the walls with his own ideas of childhood pictures. A winsome pink lady in her garden carries a jade green parasol and wanders among her brilliant posies. A sturdy farmer grows his gorgeous pumpkins and carrots, a valiant hunter in sola toupee, an African jungle; lions, elephants, automobiles, ships of adventure, spouting whales, locomotives and Esquimaux, each is given its place. Above them floats a phantom balloon

with "Vive la France!" to arouse their curiosity. What child could be anything but happy with such companions.

Whether it be a long drab hallway transformed into a gallery of panels—each a charming picture—one poetic and romantic as a Fragonard, or a child's nursery — its walls metamorphosed into a fairyland or Mother Gooseland—it makes no difference; either one is equally fascinating.

FAUNE

V ✣ A ✣ R ✣ I ✣ E ✣ T ✣ Y

AN ESSAY BY PAUL THÉVENAZ

Igor Stravinsky once told me, "*Ce que le public te reproche, développe le, c'est toi.*"

BY struggling against one's fault one does not reach anywhere. It is smothering it and giving it more power like putting a cover on a boiling pot. Open it. Let the steam come out and use this power by adjustment.

But, although limitation is style, it would be better to reach style and keep it through variety of expressions and means. Most artists reach success through doing the same thing over and over again. They develop a "personality" by exaggerating some tricky way of doing one thing and usually overdoing it. They would think

themselves dishonored to sign their name on a thing different from the easy routine of their own.

They hold to their "personality" as they would walk on very thin ice not daring to do anything that would break it and let the under-water play freely. This is why there are on exhibition a display of more or less skillful techniques. Without object they belittle the *subject* of their pictures; but they would not change it for anything, because their means do not allow them to do so. It seems to me that if one has a real individuality it will come out anyway, more or less successfully, but it would improve greatly through the greatest variety of mediums and subjects possible. Most of the artists are too much specialists. They go on a track like a railroad train. They are very much troubled if a wheel slips out, while they ought to be glad. Life is nothing but a field of experiences and the more we get the better. None of the pre-Renaissance artists ever thought of wearing the proud corslet of a strong originality. They tried very hard, as a matter of fact, to paint as well as they could and satisfy Mr. Medici, who had ordered a Madonna for his family's chapel. This did

not prevent them from doing great things that have a meaning and can stand criticism on any point of view, even literary and sentimental.

When I see a man painting very successfully a pear on a plate, I admire his technique. His means of expression, his marvelous way of getting out of a plain subject such a refined harmony of rhythm, poetry and geometry. But the aim of art, whatever one thinks it might be, is certainly not that. If the artist is limited to that sort of thing he will go on painting pears on plates all his life and make a brilliant career of it. But is this the way a human life ought to be spent?

If he deliberately limits himself to such works of art, then he is a lazy dilettante and no more worthy of consideration than a singer who would limit himself to singing notes and scales.

Perfection has been reached on that line by Chardin, but his still life paintings are not his only title to fame —and this very perfection ought to have done the job for his successors. One does not climb about a mountain where a funiculaire can take you unless one wants to do it for the personal fun or the physical training.

The artist today has the priceless advantage of all the experiences of the past Masters. He should have a perfect knowledge of them and of all that which has been learned through the centuries. He should use freely and tactfully the various lessons of the past, and by placing his aim further and higher, try to express new ideas through the infinite variety of means he should possess instead of merely developing petty personal tricks and repeating the same thing over and over again. The "heirlooms of humanity," museums, those moseleums of art, would not be so absolutely dead if people could realize that the past is not the past any more. If artists would dare to be romantic with Delacroix, when they have something romantic to do, classic when need be, and primitive when they want to! Why should not an artist, free of prejudice and self-admiration, use in the same composition, Tiepolo's fantasy, Watteau's distinction, and Monet's discoveries? He would not lose a particle of his own personality, but he would have to use something new in art, *tact*. He would not have to copy, but simply, even as the latest discoveries in electricity are applied to every use, he

would use Tiepolo's, Watteau's and Monet's experiences, thus doing them honor, bringing them back to life, and gloriously giving their labor new fruits. The past would not be so far away and the present would be richer.

Artists would then need intelligence and absolute and perfect sense of rhythm, poise and tact. They would find out that they lacked these qualities and they would start out to develop them. It would be a new education for them and for the public. It would link together the different flowers of our civilization now scattered and dry throughout the whole world and throughout time.

Anachronism and exotism ought to be conquered; then there would be no more anachronisms and exotisms, because by destroying time and space in reality, we should arrive at such a practical and simple way of dealing with all the works of the dead and the foreign that there would not be any more uneasiness or self-consciousness; thus no artist with a real personality would be deprived of it, and local color or racial characteristics would not suffer. We need perfect assimilation through rhythmic-

al education, serious technical training and absolute mental clarity.

Quality cannot be annihilated. It will come out. It is the sparkle of divinity that will give life to any work. Should it not be used to give life to better things instead of being wasted so prodigally as it is now? Through mastering all style and manners, the artist of today knows too much to forget, and not enough to generalize, too much to be unconscious, and not enough to be unconscious again. It is foolish for him to pretend not to know anything, and escape all influence to create something new. He must acquire more knowledge in order to grasp the ensemble of the world's knowledge, and extract from it the leading principle of beauty.

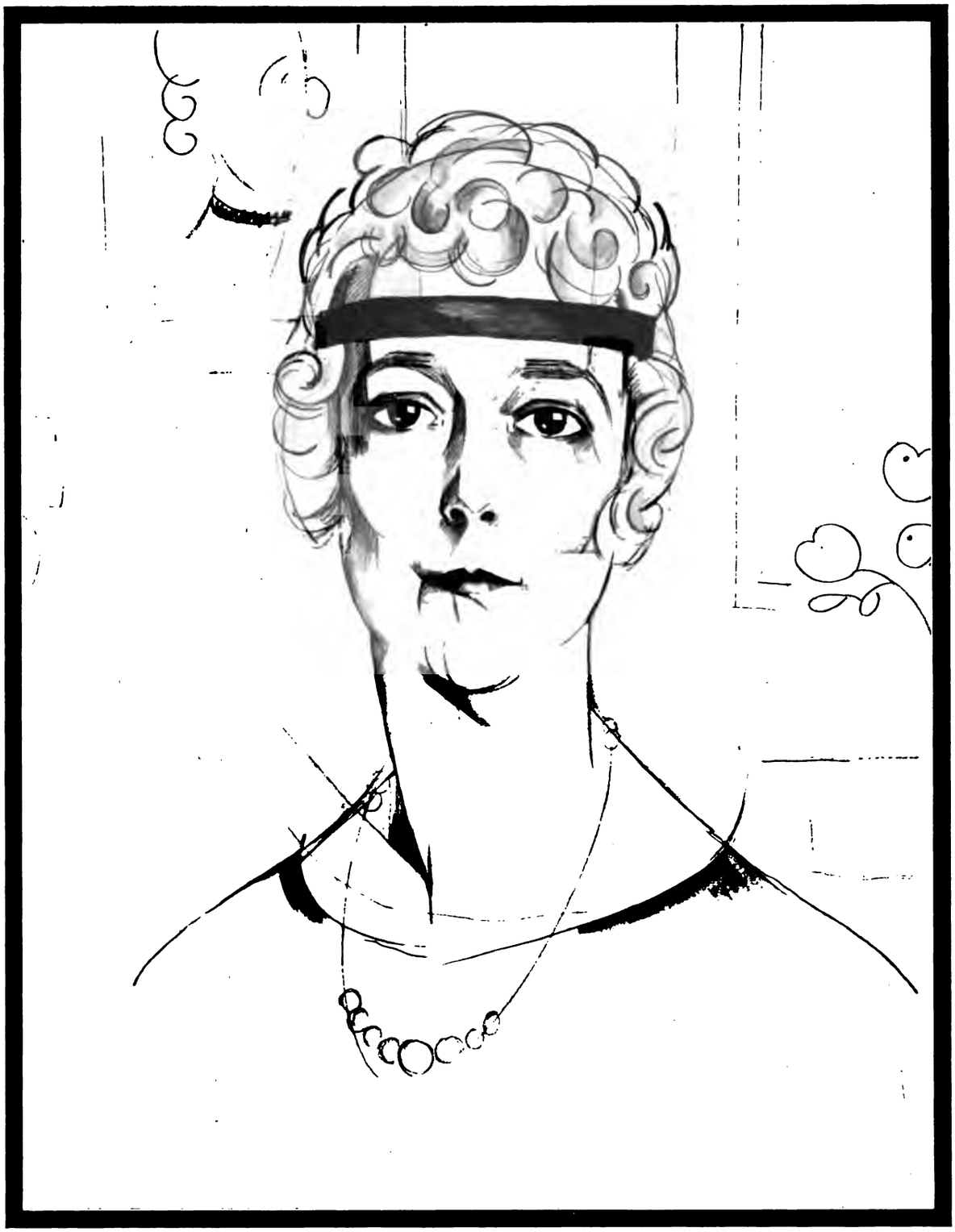
P O R T R A I T S

SELF PORTRAIT, 1914

PIERRE DE LANUX

PORTRAIT OF A NEGRO

MISS FANIA MARINOFF



MISS ELSIE DE WOLFE

PORTRAIT

MADAME DE BAILLETS

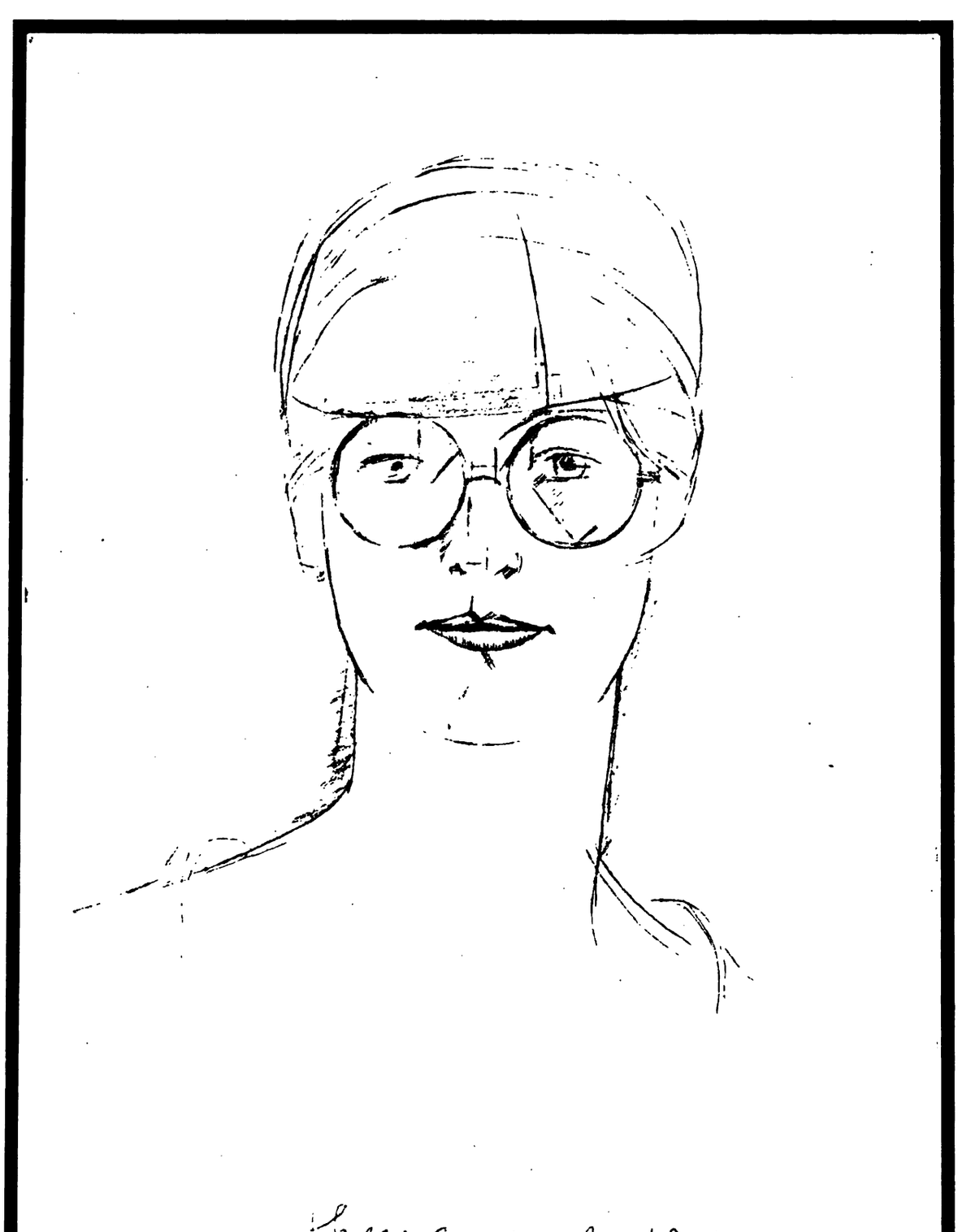
PORTRAIT

MADAME TAPPÉ

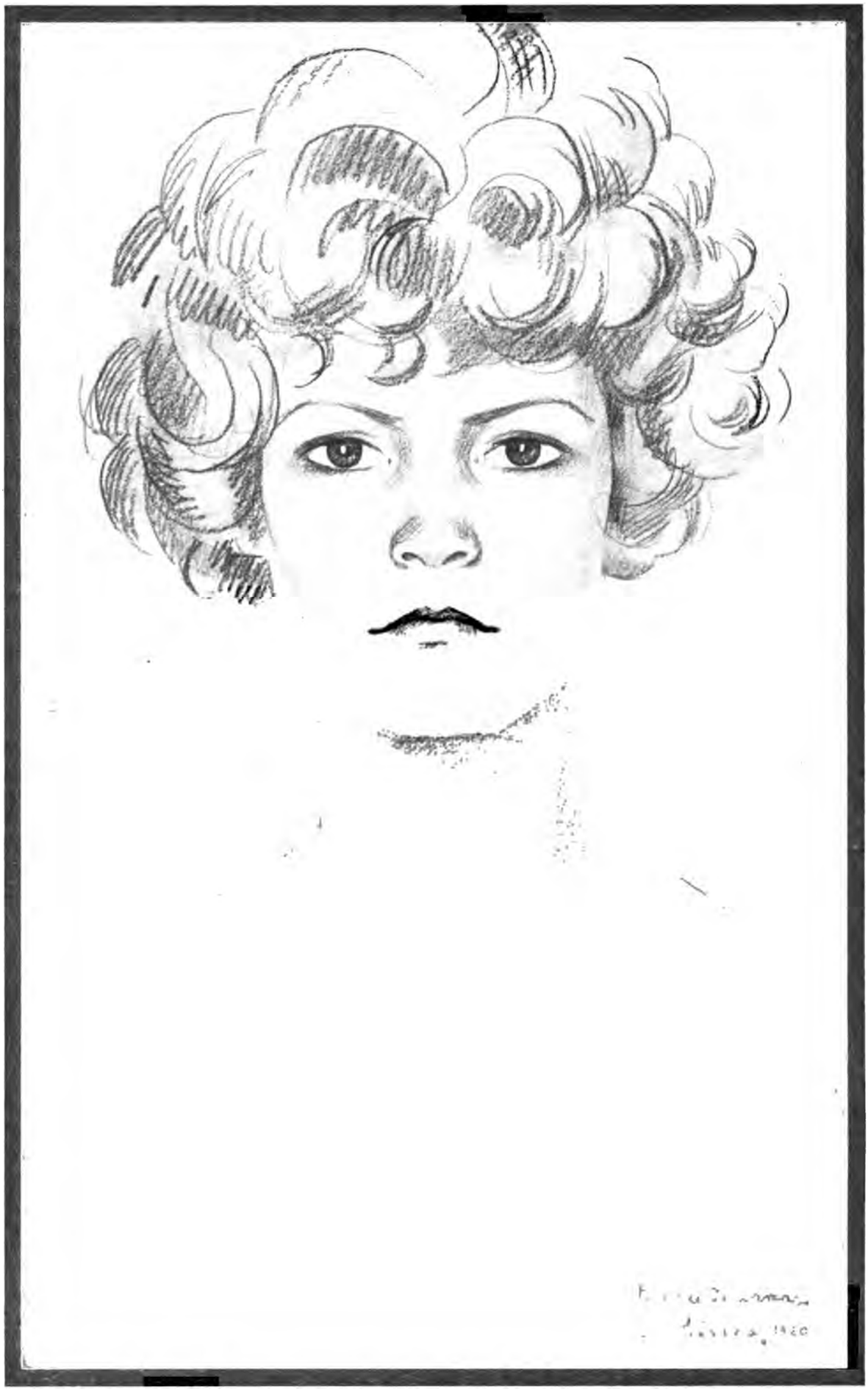
MRS. JOHN ALDEN CARPENTER

ESTRELLITA

MRS. GEORGE BLUMENTHAL

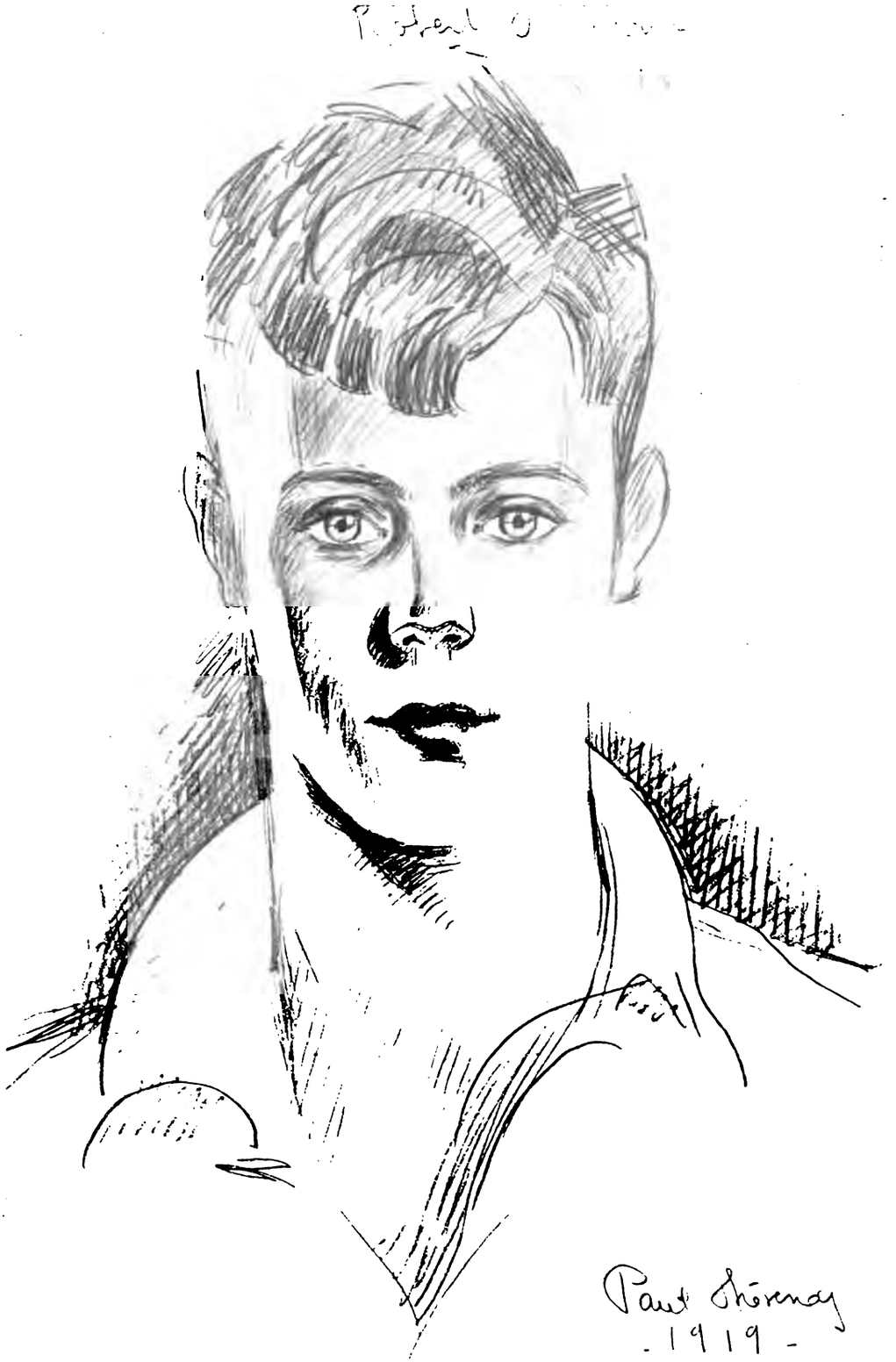


MRS. RUBY ROSS GOODNOW



MISS ALICE DE LA MAR

MISS EVANGELINE JOHNSON



ROBERT O. HANDLEY

SELF PORTRAIT, 1921

DIANE CHASSERESSE

DRAWINGS *and* PAINTINGS

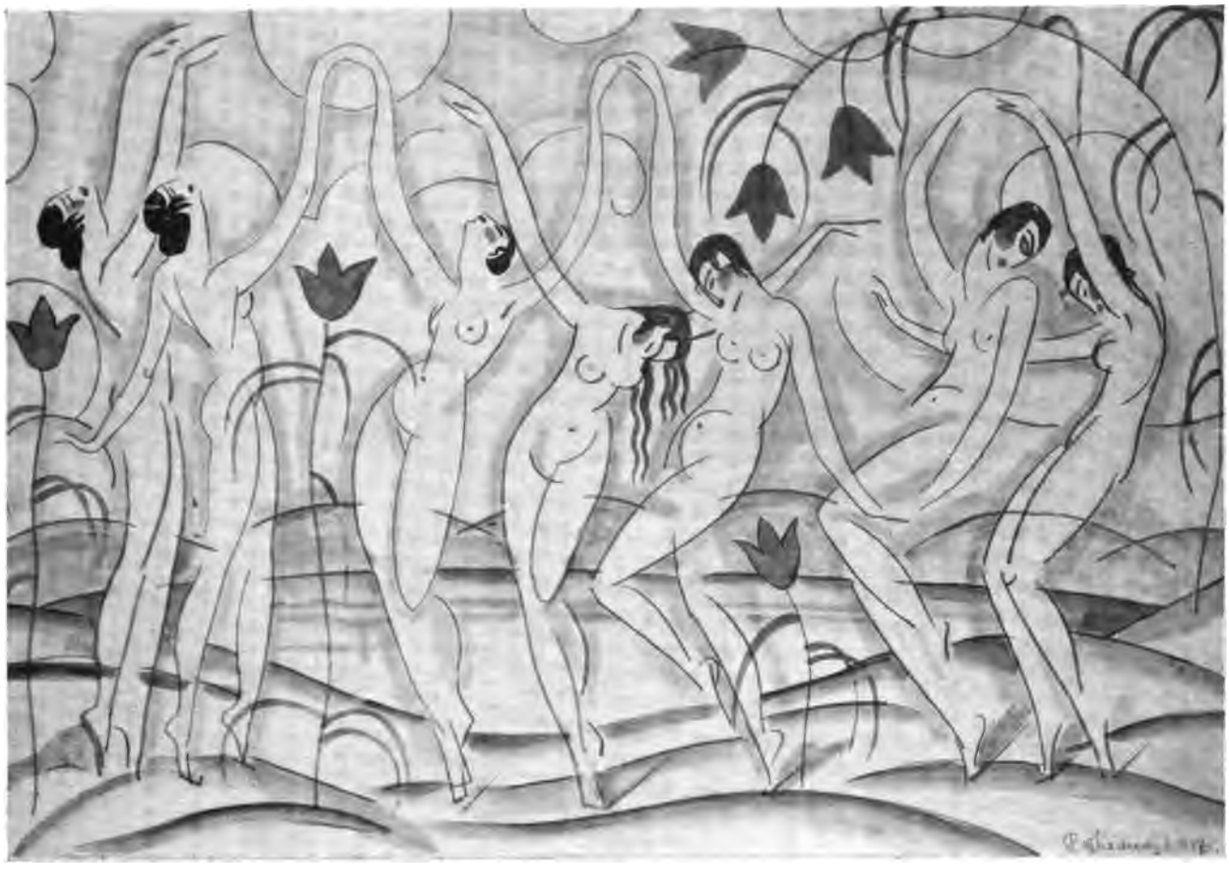
THE SHEPHERDESS

LE PRINTEMPS

NYMPH AND FAUNE

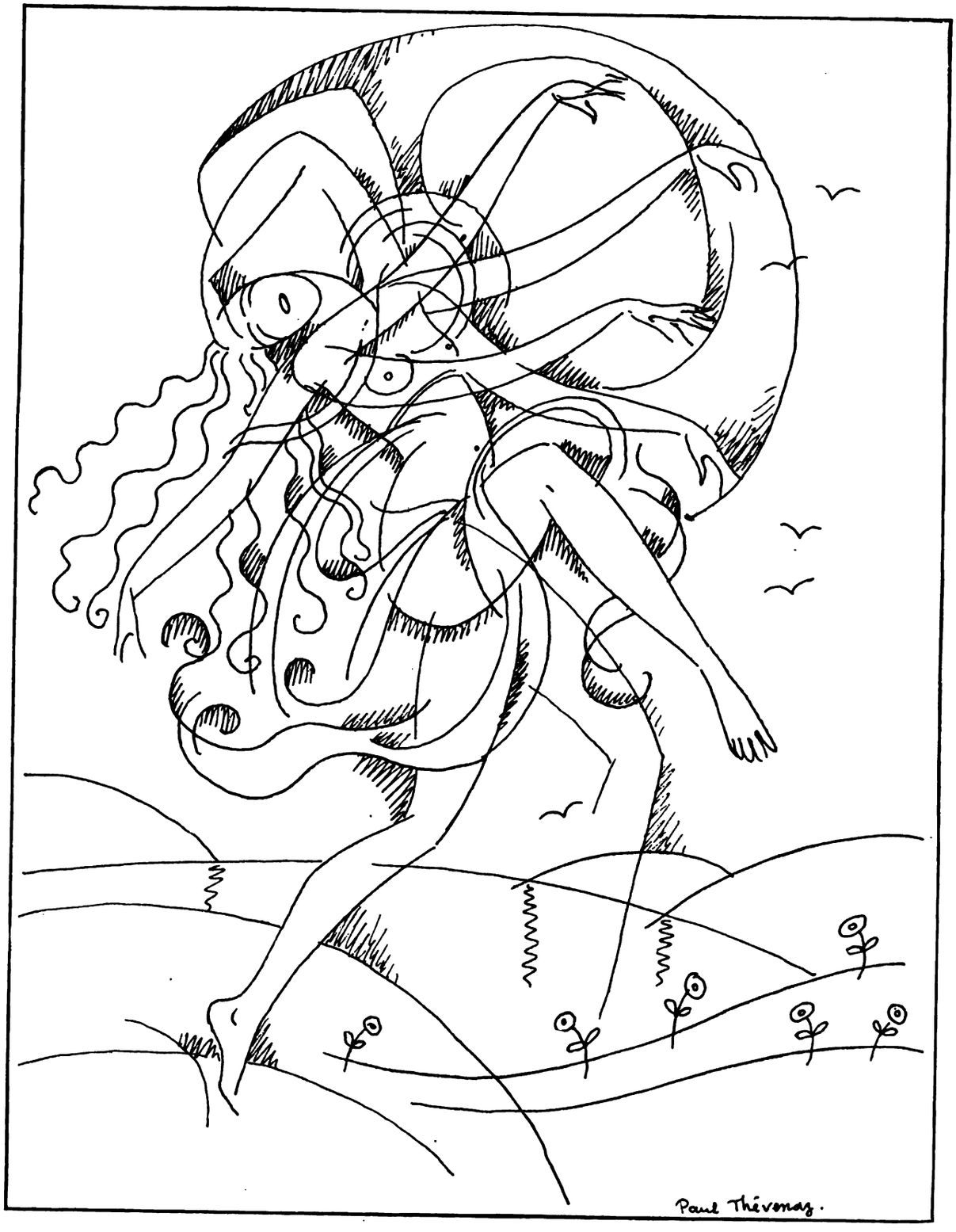
LE RÊVE

FAUNE

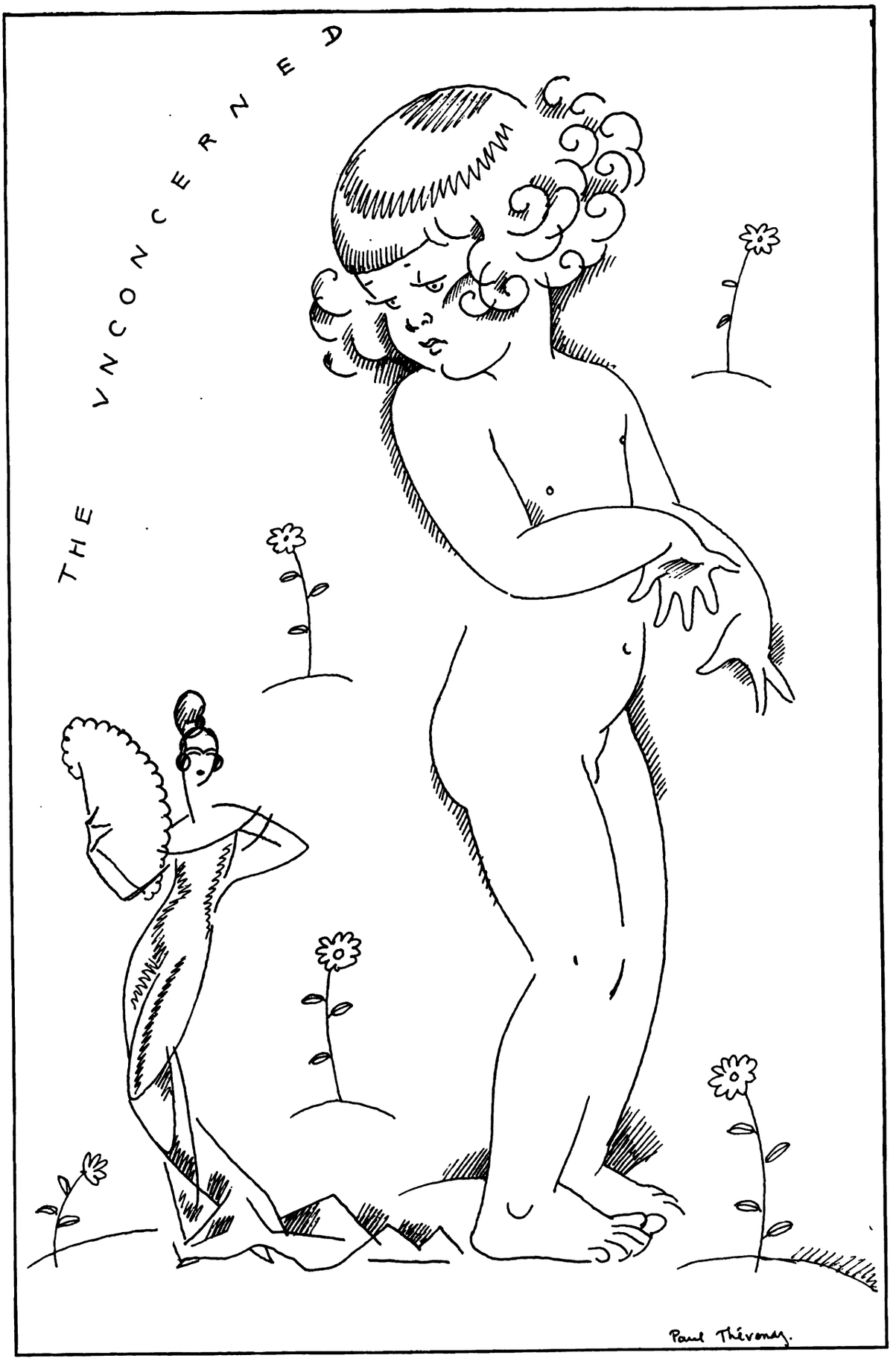


LA DANSE

RHYTHM



DANCER


THE UNCONCERNED
Paul Thévenaz.

TYROLEAN FANTASY

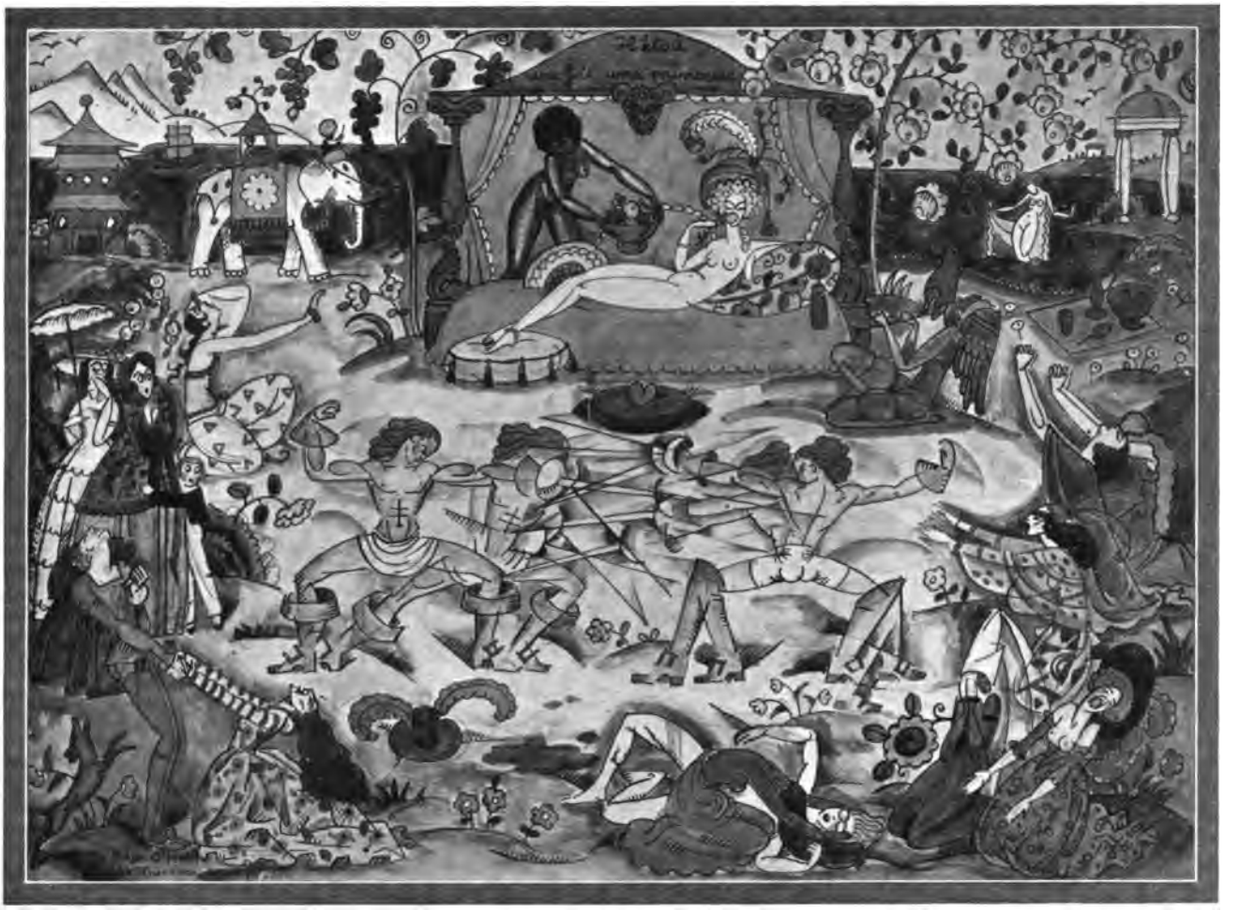
THE FINAL KISS

THE PURITAN

THE DEBUTANTE

LE JARDIN D'AMOUR

ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON



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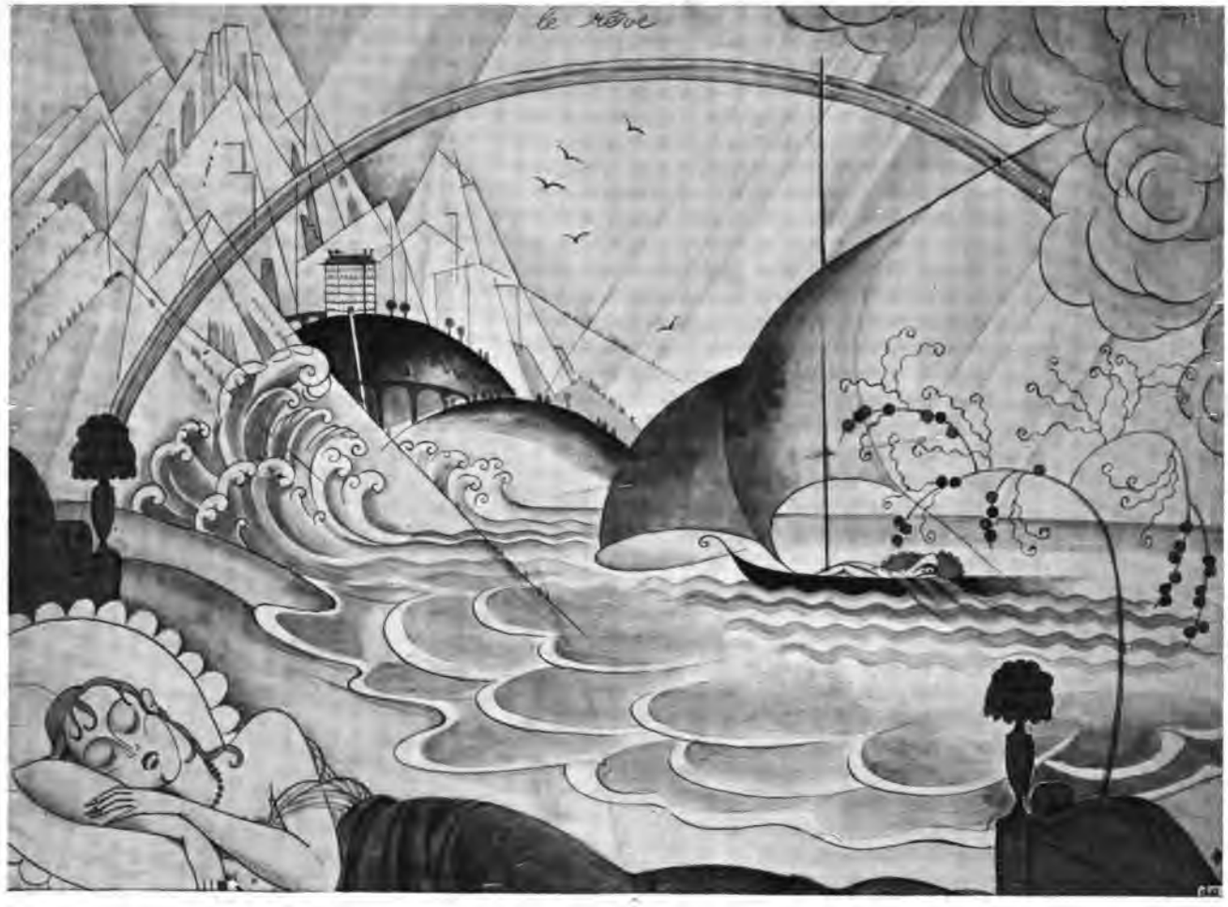
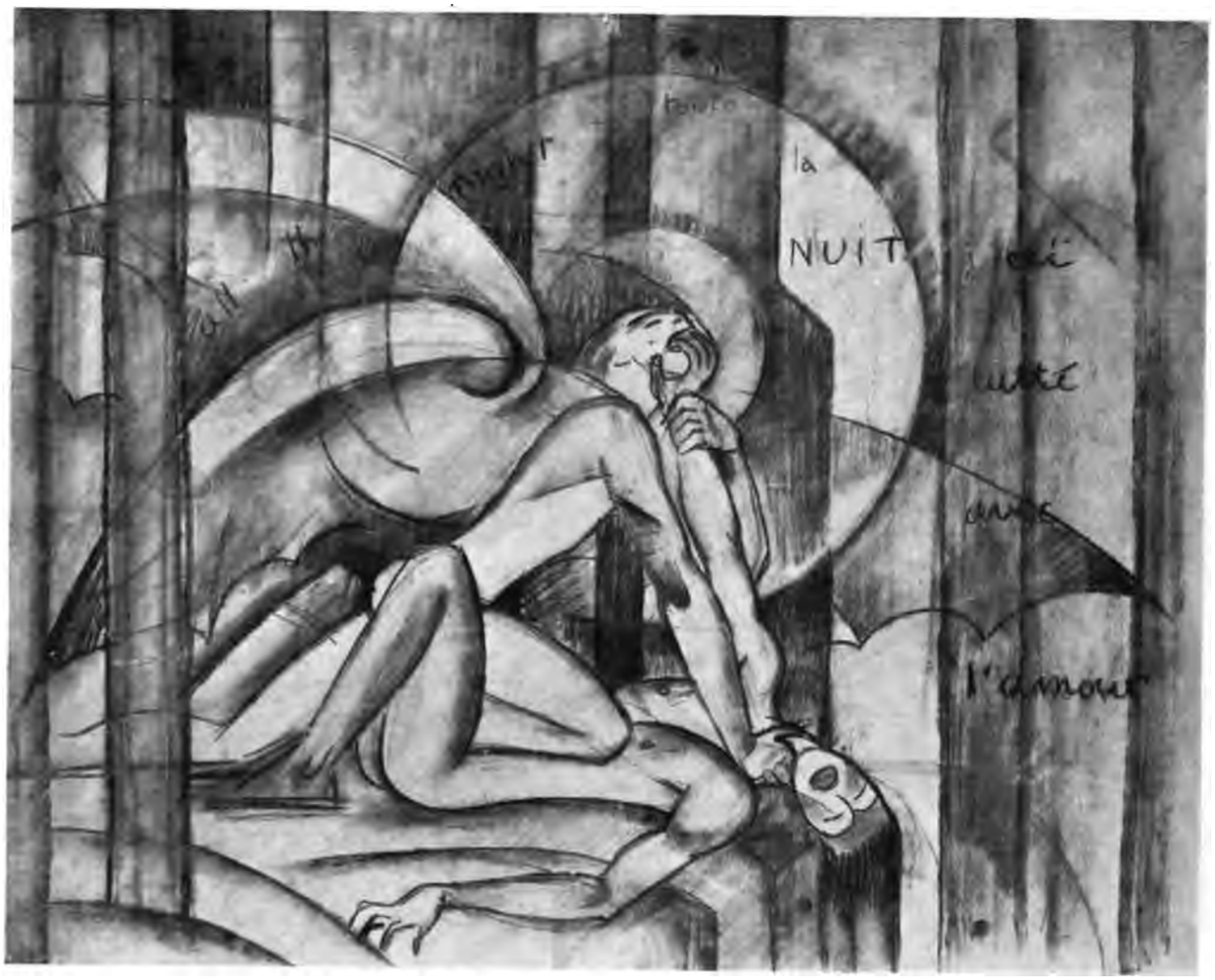


LE RÊVE

LE VOYAGEUR



TOUTE LA NUIT J'AI LUTTE AVEC L'AMOUR

LA TAMPETE

ISRAFEL—(UNFINISHED SKETCH)

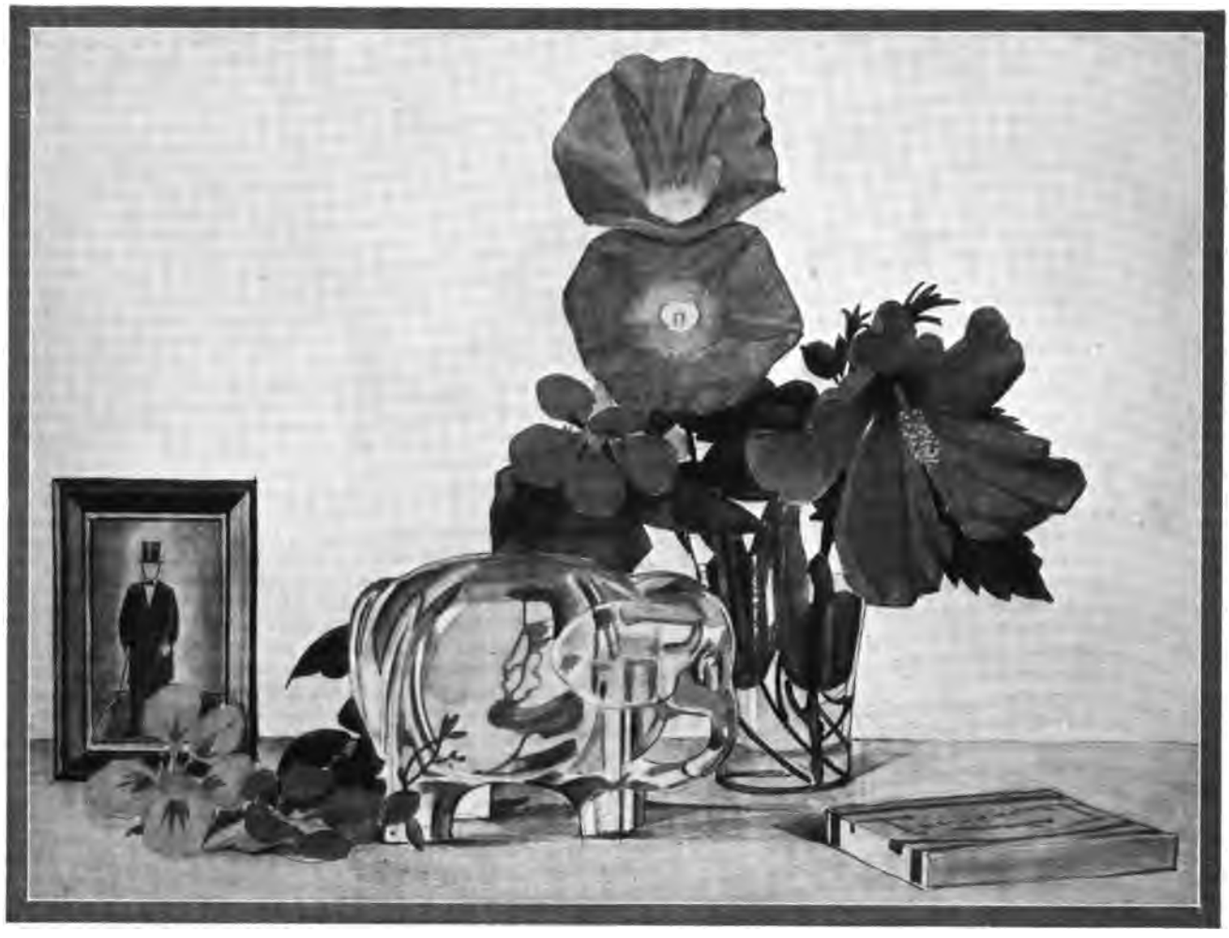
ANGEL—(UNFINISHED SKETCH)

EQUESTRIENNE (UNFINISHED SKETCH)

LE CIRQUE

LEDA

LA BELLE CRÉOLE



THE GLASS ELEPHANT

NASTURTIUMS

SNAP SHOT—FLORIDA

FLORIDA JUNGLE

FLORIDA SKETCH

FLORIDA JUNGLE

ILLUSTRATION FOR A SONG BOOK

ILLUSTRATION FOR A SONG BOOK

THE YOUNG CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE

COSTUME SKETCHES

ICE BALLET GUARD

DOMINO

for the Salomé
of Oscar Wilde

COSTUME SKETCH

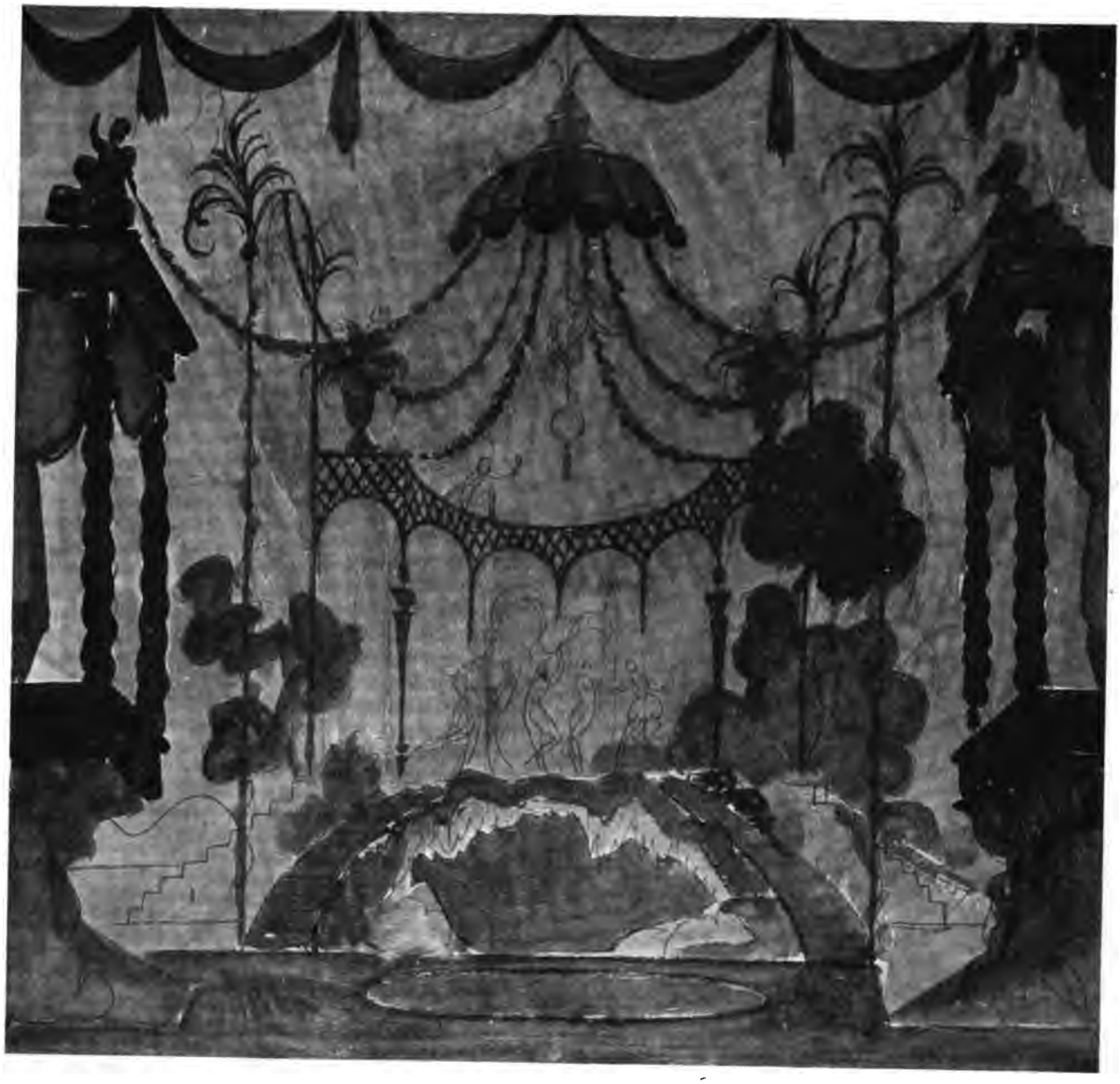
MURAL DECORATIONS

DESIGN FOR A CURTAIN

MURAL DECORATION FOR A THEATRE

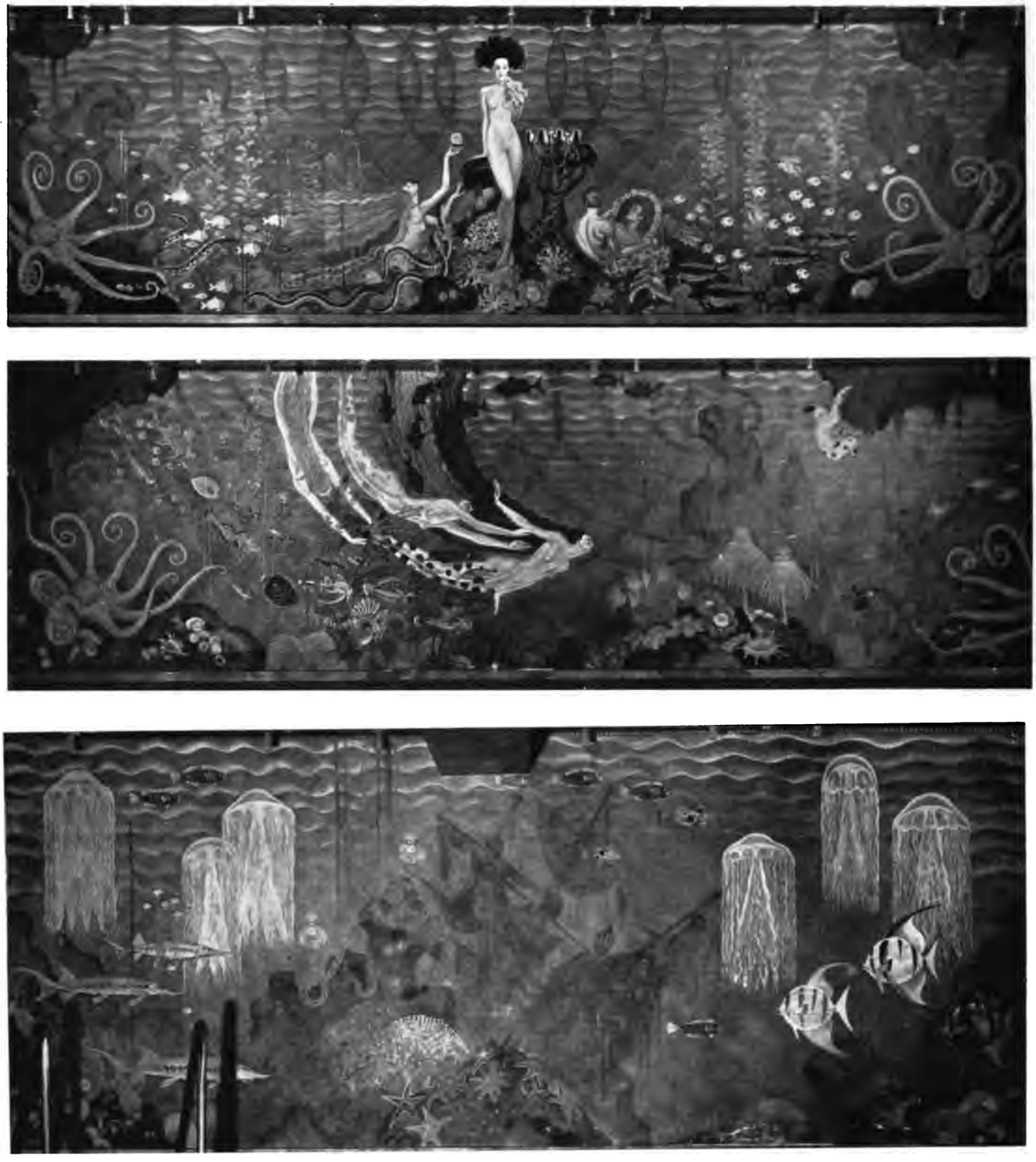
ORIENTAL DANCE

PIERROT, COLUMBINE AND HARLEQUIN
MURAL DECORATION FOR A THEATRE



SKETCH FOR A THEATRE

FOUNTAIN STEPS—SKETCH FOR A SCREEN



MURAL DECORATION FOR THE SWIMMING POOL OF
MRS. GEORGE BLUMENTHAL

DETAIL OF MURAL DECORATION
FOR THE SWIMMING POOL OF
MRS. GEORGE BLUMENTHAL

MURAL DECORATION IN THE SWIMMING POOL
OF MRS. GEORGE BLUMENTHAL

THE DISEMBARKATION—MURAL DECORATION

MURAL DECORATION—CHARLIE CHAPLIN

MURAL DECORATION — THEDA BARA

MURAL DECORATION—WILLIAM S. HART

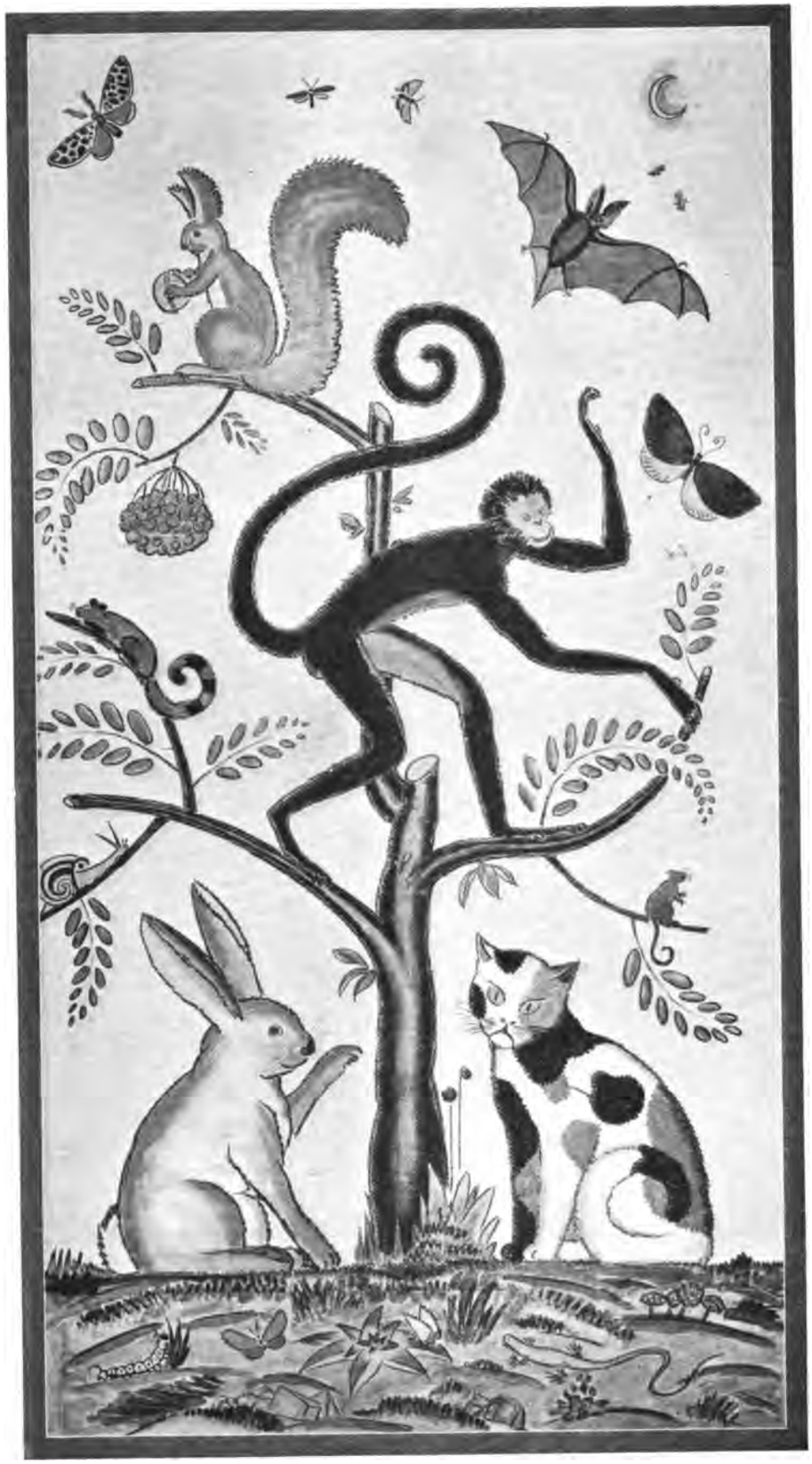
MURAL DECORATION—DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS

MURAL DECORATION FOR A PLAY ROOM

MURAL DECORATION FOR A PLAY ROOM

MURAL DECORATION FOR A PLAY ROOM

MURAL DECORATION FOR A PLAY ROOM



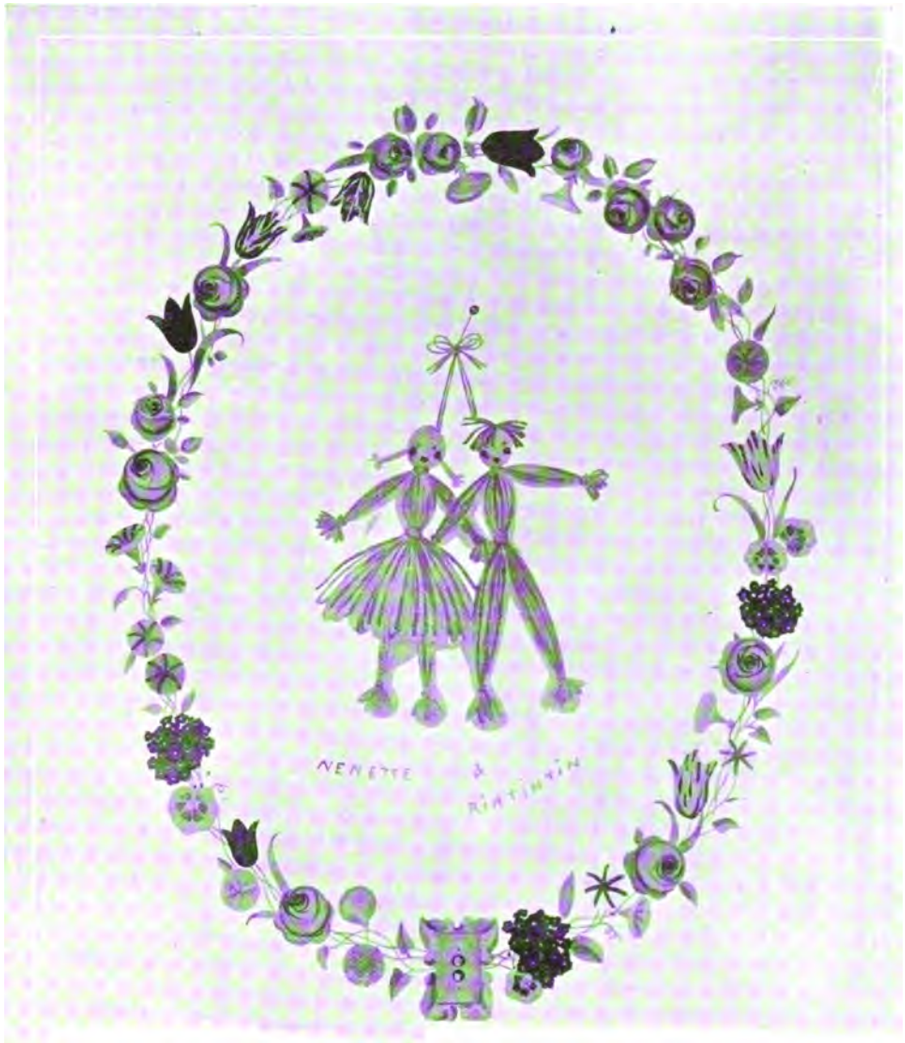
MURAL DECORATION FOR A PLAY ROOM

MURAL DECORATION — PLAY ROOM

TROPICAL BIRDS—SKETCH FOR A SCREEN

ORPHEUS

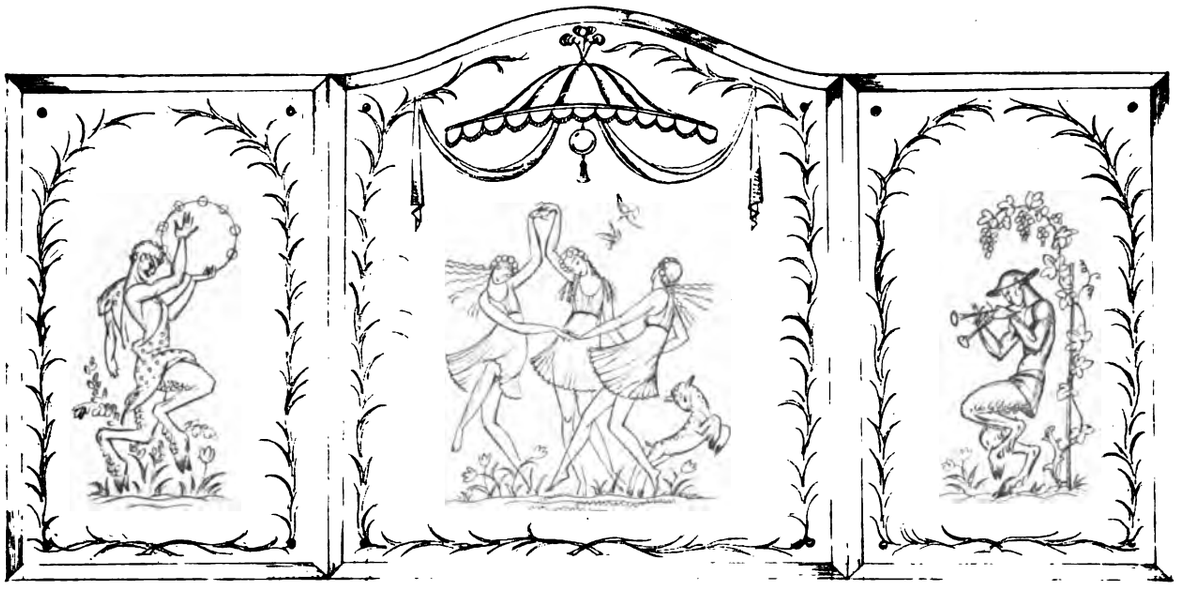
MURAL DECORATION



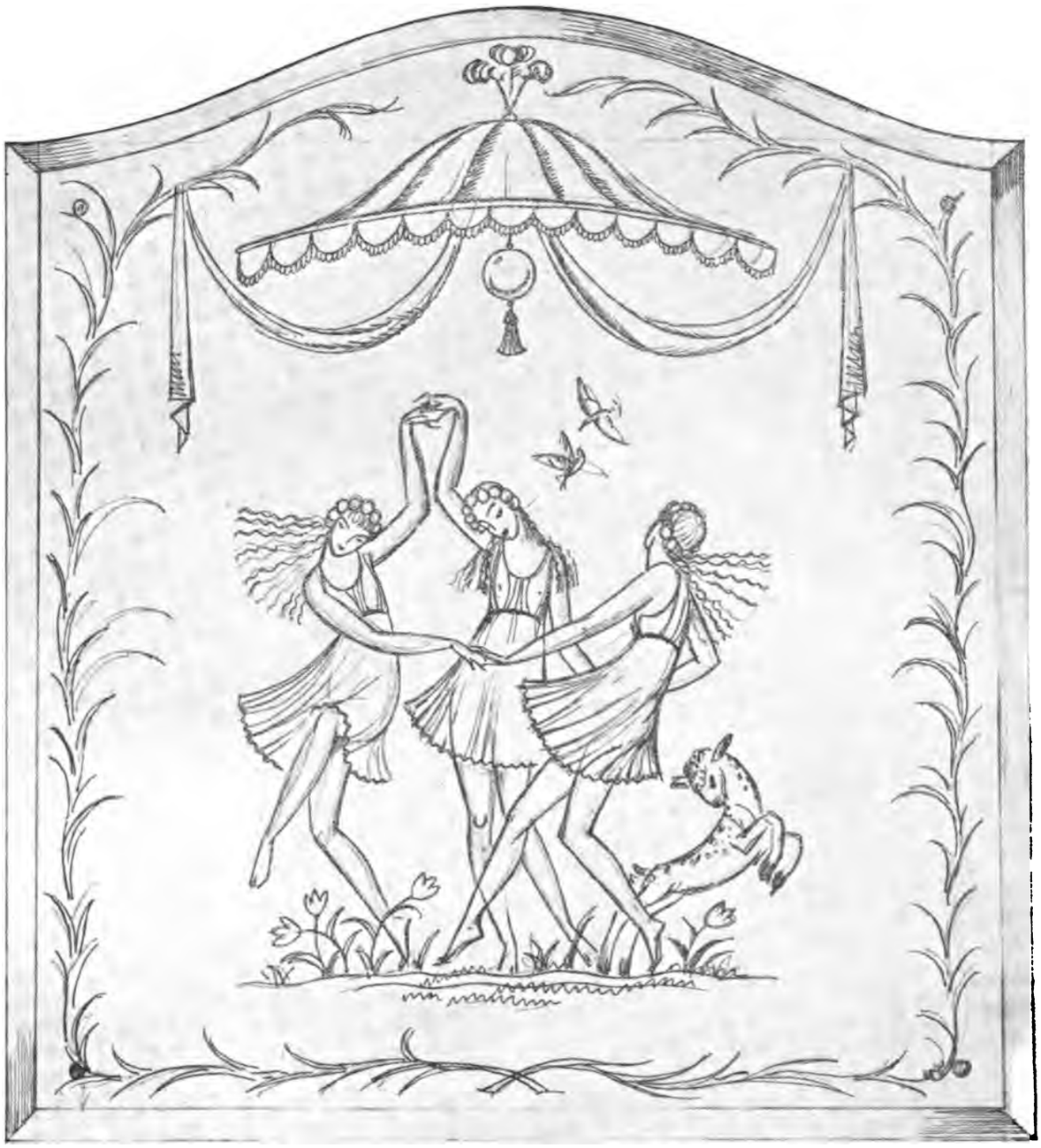
MURAL DECORATION

BLIND MAN'S BUFF (MURAL)

MIRROR DECORATION FOR THE ARTS GUILD EXHIBITION



DESIGN FOR A MIRROR



DESIGN FOR A MIRROR (DETAIL)

APRÉS LA PLUIE LE BEAU TEMPS

UNFINISHED SKETCH FOR A CEILING

CHERUB

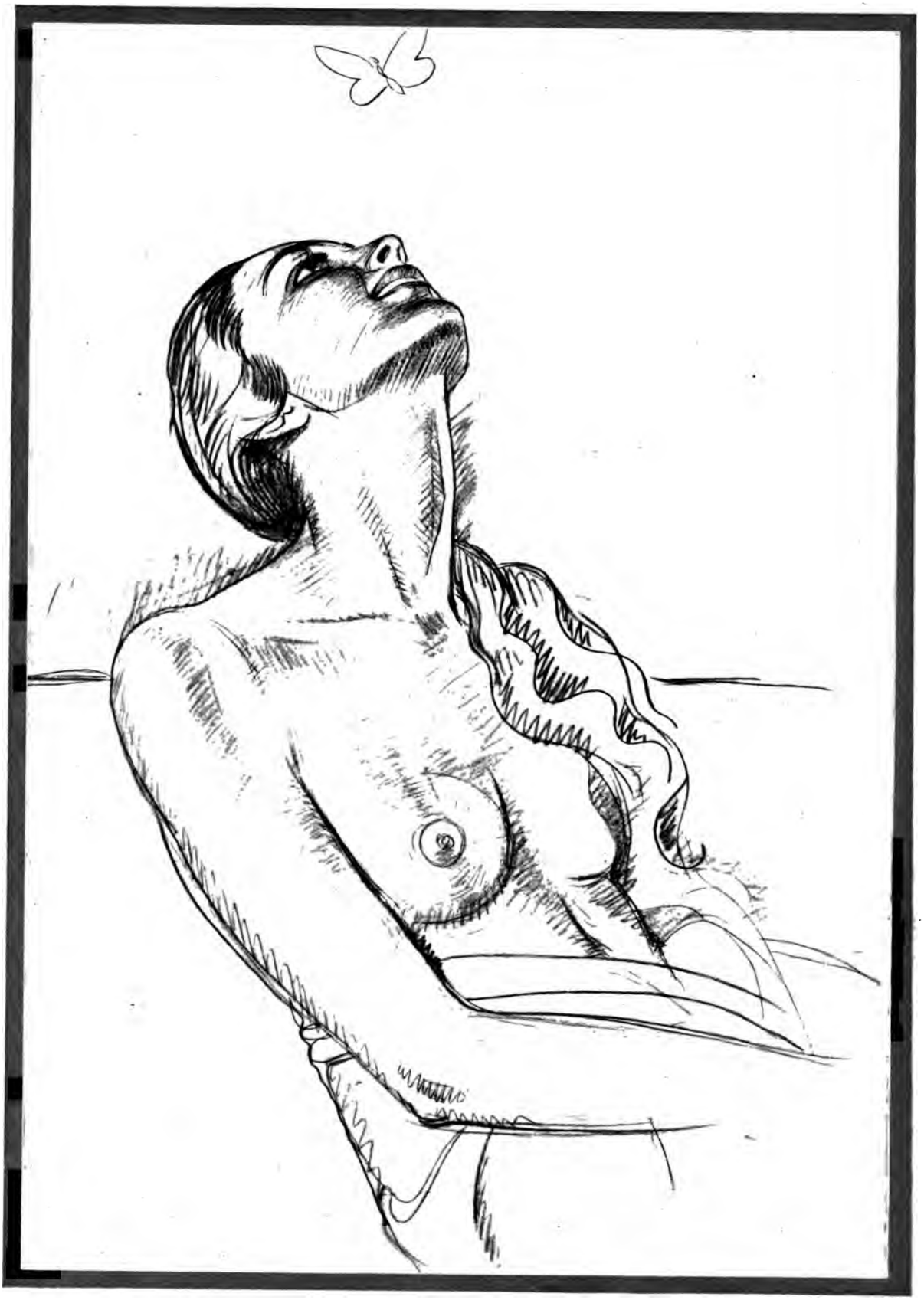
CHERUB

CHERUB

CHERUB

SKETCHES *and* UNFINISHED DRAWINGS

SKETCH



NUDE FIGURE

SKETCH FOR BLUMENTHAL POOL

SKETCH

SKETCH

SKETCH

L' ISOLE'E

ILLUSTRATION

MINSTREL SHOW

SKETCH

C O N T E N T S

Four Portraits of Paul Thévenaz—*Frontispiece*

Portrait, 1920—*Painted by the Artist*

At Work—*Snapshot*

At Play—*Photo by Alice Boughton*

Portrait, 1921—*Portrait by Marcia Stein*

Paul Thévenaz—The Artist and His Work - - - - 11

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Reproductions of the Artist's Work—*Beginning on page 29 in the following order*:

*Peace—*Facing the Title Page*

*Faune—*Water Color*

PORTRAITS

Self Portrait, 1914—*Pencil and Gold Paint*

Pierre De Lanux—*Pencil and Water Color*

Portrait of a Negro—*Pencil and Water Color*

Miss Fania Marinoff—*Pencil and Water Color*

Miss Elsie De Wolfe—*Pencil and Water Color*

Portrait—*Pencil and Water Color*

Madame DeBaillets—*Pencil and Water Color*

Portrait—*Pencil and Water Color*

*[The Colored Plates are indicated by asterisks]

C O N T E N T S

Madame Tappé—*Pencil and Water Color*

Mrs. John Alden Carpenter—*Pencil and Water Color*

Estrellita—*Pencil and Crayon*

Mrs. George Blumenthal—*Pencil Drawing*

Mrs. Ruby Ross Goodnow—*Pencil Drawing*

Miss Alice De La Mar—*Pencil Drawing*

Miss Evangeline Johnson—*Pencil Drawing*

Robert O. Handley—*Pencil Drawing*

Self Portrait—1921—*Charcoal Pencil*

DRAWINGS AND PAINTINGS

*Diane Chasseresse—*Water Color*

The Shepherdess—*Water Color*

Le Printemps—*Water Color on Silver*

Nymph and Faune (The Evil of Pride)—*Water Color*

Le Rêve (The Strange Discovery)—*Water Color*

Faune (My God)—*Water Color*

La Danse (Enchantment)—*Water Color and Pencil*

Rhythm (Fuga)—*Water Color and Pencil*

Dancer—*Pen and Ink*

The Unconcerned—*Pen and Ink*

Tyrolean Fantasy—*Water Color in Green and White*

C O N T E N T S

The Final Kiss (To Him the Woman Displays Herself)—*Pencil and Water Color*

The Puritan—*Pencil and Water Color*

*The Debutante—*Water Color*

Le Jardin d'Amour—*Water Color*

St. George and the Dragon—*Water Color*

Il'Etait Une Fois Une Princesse—*Water Color*

Le Rêve—*Pencil and Water Color*

Le Voyageur—*Pencil and Water Color*

La Tempete (The Sky Is Dead)—*Water Color*

Toute la Nuit j'ai lutte Avec l'Amour—*Water Color*

Israfel—*Unfinished Sketch in Oil*

Angel—*Unfinished Sketch in Oil*

Equestrienne—*Sketch for a Hooked Rug*

Le Cirque—*Water Color*

Leda—*Water Color*

La Belle Creole—*Pencil and Water Color*

The Glass Elephant—*Water Color*

Nasturtiums—*Water Color*

In Florida—*A Snap Shot*

Florida Jungle—*Water Color*

Florida Sketch—*Water Color*

Florida Jungle—*Water Color*

C O N T E N T S

Illustration for a Song Book—*Pen and Ink Colored*

Illustration for a Song Book—*Pen and Ink Colored*

COSTUME SKETCHES

*The Young Christ in the Temple—*Tempera*

Ice Ballet Guard—*Water Color*

Domino—*Water Color*

Salome—*Water Color*

Costume Sketch—*Water Color*

MURAL DECORATIONS

Design for a Frieze—*Water Color*

Oriental Dance—Mural Decoration for a Theatre—*Oil*

Pierrot, Columbine and Harlequin—Mural Decoration for a Theatre—*Oil*

Sketch for a Theatre in Chicago—*Water Color*

Fountain Steps—Sketch for a Screen—*Water Color*

Mural Decorations for the Swimming Pool of Mrs. George Blumenthal—*Oil*

Detail of Mural Decoration for the Swimming Pool of Mrs. George Blumenthal—*Oil*

Mural Decoration for the Swimming Pool of Mrs. George Blumenthal—*Oil*

C O N T E N T S

The Disembarkation—Mural Decoration—*Water Color*

Mural Decoration—Charlie Chaplin—*Charcoal*

Mural Decoration—Theda Bara—*Charcoal*

Mural Decoration—William S. Hart—*Charcoal*

Mural Decoration—Douglas Fairbanks—*Charcoal*

Mural Decoration for a Play Room—*Water Color*

Mural Decoration for a Play Room—*Water Color*

Mural Decoration for a Play Room—*Water Color*

Mural Decoration for a Play Room—*Water Color*

Mural Decoration for a Play Room—*Water Color*

Mural Decoration for a Play Room—*Water Color*

Tropical Birds—Sketch for Screen—*Water Color*

Orpheus—*Water Color*

Mural Decoration—*Water Color*

Mural Decoration—*Water Color*

Blind Man's Buff—Mural Decoration—*Oil*

Mirror Decoration for the Arts Guild Exhibition—
Oil on Silver

Design for a Mirror—*Pen and Ink Sketch*

Design for a Mirror (Detail)—*Pen and Ink Sketch*

Unfinished Sketch for a Mural Decoration—*Water Color*
(Apres La Pluie Le Beau Temps)

C O N T E N T S

Unfinished Sketch for a Ceiling—*Water Color*

Cherub—*Charcoal*

Cherub—*Charcoal*

Cherub—*Charcoal*

Cherub—*Charcoal*

*Rain—*Water Color*

SKETCHES AND UNFINISHED DRAWINGS

Sketch—*Pencil*

Nude Figure—*Pencil*

Sketch for Blumenthal Pool—*Pencil*

Sketch—*Pencil*

Sketch—*Pencil*

Sketch—*Pencil*

L'Isolé—*Pencil*

Illustration—*Pen and Ink*

Minstrel Show—*Water Color*

Sketch—*Pencil*

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